By Cindy Craig Fugett
November 1987 No.5

Well, it's been several issues since I've played editor, but thanks to Paul, you've continued receiving our quarterly missive about goings on at Gate 5 Road. Dick and I have been busy the last three months tending to Kerry, our absolutely delightful three-month-old daughter. I'm working at home part of the time, and right now Kerry is sitting in her seat on the counter next to the computer, keeping me charmingly distracted with her giggles, kicks, and stares. My efficiency level is low.

In addition to becoming a mother, I've returned to school part-time in the hopes of getting my CPA. The pace of life has definitely changed. But then, the pace of things in the world has changed, as evidenced by the latest happenings on Wall Street. I'm writing this three days after the 508 point nose-dive, and can only guess at where things will be when you're reading this. Dick has been actively reading books about the Great Depression (John Kenneth Galbraith's, "The Great Crash," (WER #57), Marion Yass's "The Great Depression," and Caroline Bird's "The Invisible Scar."). He thinks that in the near future anything could happen, but in the long run he believes the balloon of debt is going to burst and the economy will be in big trouble.

On other fronts, Donald and Susan Ryan are madly trying to get the roof to their house on before California's winter rains hit. Donald's brother is coming out from Maine to help with construction and may even build them a bathtub while he's here. Apparently he makes high-tech rowing shells for a living, and figured a sleek bathtub was the next challenge.

Susan has also returned to school. Her plans are to start a new career in textiles, and she hopes to someday be traveling the world in search of exotic fabrics. She'll be leaving Point after completing the spring 1988 issue, which she'll be guest editing. The emphasis will be on Cultural Geography, a subject she's been intrigued with since studying geography in college. Getting material hasn't been a problem; choosing what to print has been.

Kathleen O'Neill, our gardener-in-residence, has adopted another garden: the Strybing Arboretum and Botanical Gardens in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park. She's a volunteer there every Friday, working in the nursery growing plants for sales. Her specialty is California native shade plants, and

more than one cutting has found its way into Kathleen's office garden.

I asked James Donnelly what he's been up to lately, and the topic that came up was accordians. If you read gossip in issue #57, you know that James recently bought a new accordian from Elderly Instruments. That brings to four the number of accordians that James owns. But accordians aren't the only musical instrument in the Donnelly/O'Neill household. Also residing there are: 2 fiddles, 3 regular guitars, 1 12-string guitar, a classical guitar, 2 mandolins, 1 piano, a concertina, a banjo, a trombone, uncountable recorders and at least a dozen harmonicas. Musical jam sessions on demand.

Since this issue seems, so far anyway, to be devoted to personal news of staff activities, I'll continue on that way.

David Burnor will soon be treading down a well-worn aisle: the one that leads to wedded bliss. He and his fiancee, Ruth Ann Holand, will be getting married in a tudor-style mansion in Berkeley, California in November. Then they're off to Hawaii where they plan to relax by doing what they both enjoy: scuba diving. Ruth Ann was David's cohort on their most recent diving trip in the Channel Islands off of Santa Barbara. The most interesting part of the trip? "Diving with the sea lions at East Anacapa Island." Who knows what they'll find in the waters of Hawaii.

Kevin was dallying with a different type of beast: the Point Bees. Located in Kathleen's office garden, the bees' presence were beginning to be felt a bit too directly, so Kevin decided to combine moving them with harvesting the honey. He started the project by separating the bees from their honey. Before he could harvest the honey, however, he left for New Mexico to attend the Artificial Life Conference. During the week he was gone, the bees, riled by being able to smell their honey but not able to get to it, buzzed Stewart out of his office. (Stewart's "office" is an old boat permanently moored in Kathleen's garden, right above the bees.) When Kevin finally did complete the harvest, he had collected 60 pounds of Sausalito honey. "A good harvest."

Richard Schauffler is back in Bulgaria playing guitar and singing at an international song festival. If we could just get him to join up with the musically inclined James and Kathleen, we could have the Travelling Whole Earth Volleyball and Accordian Show.

Paul Davis, General Purpose Clerk and Newsletter Editor, has decided it's time to get back into gear, and he means it literally. Paul recently bought a new mountain bike with 18 gears, which he needs to ride the bike up the 30 degree hill to his Sausalito home. During the summer of 1980 Paul spent many hours on a bike as he rode cross-country from Boston to S.F.

That's it for the personal scene. As far as business is concerned, we're currently comfortable financially which is a relief for me because I can actually pay bills when they're due. We've never stiffed anyone, but we have had to drag our heels sometimes before being able to settle accounts.

One of the reasons we're doing well is because Keith Jordan and Richard Schauffler have been working hard at improving our renewal rate. The average renewal rate for issues #48-#52 had been around 52%. With issue #53, subscribers are renewing at about 65%. A big improvement, and one for which we are all grateful. But you have to remember that any renewal rate less than 100% means we're still losing subscribers, and if we don't get new ones somehow, somewhere, we could eventually disappear through attrition. In the past, most of our new subscribers have come from copies of the magazine sold on the newsstand. We're currently trying to reach new people through a direct mail campaign, but the figures aren't in yet. Long-term objectives are financial stability and health, growth, and hopefully some benefits for the staff. For me the benefits are being able to work part-time, but it would be nice to have some health coverage through Point.

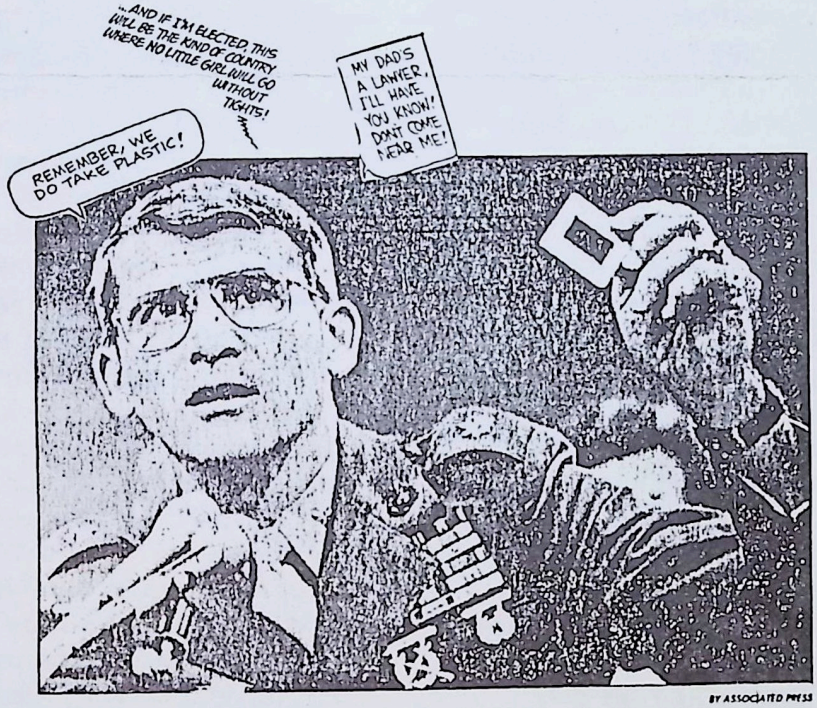
As you may know our newsstand copies are no longer being distributed by Dell, but instead by Warner Distributing. It's too soon to know how effective they're going to be as distributors, but they have suggested that we need to put more copies out on newsstands if we want to improve our sales. Currently we're putting about 24,000 copies out through Warner and they'd like us to increase it to about 45,000. Keith has done some preliminary calculations to determine whether or not we should do it and indications are we should. If we can sell just 20% of our total copies, we'll pay for the extra costs of printing, shipping, salaries, etc. The sell-through on our U.S. and Canadian copies has been in the 30% range. One of the benefits of distributing more copies via the newsstands is that we have the chance to reach more people, all of whom are potential subscribers.

The current issue of Whole Earth Review (issue #57) has stirred a bit of controversy among our readers and distributors. One subscriber tore off the cover and, in no uncertain terms, cancelled his subscription. Another wrote in and said we're publishing articles that are inappropriate for her seven-year-old son to read. And several distributors have noticed resistance on the part of some newsstands to even display the magazine. It's sad to think we may actually have some outlets cancel future orders for the magazine, but controversy has always been a part of life around here and hopefully the cover and the articles have stirred some discussions among our readers.

Recent rains and a hectic production schedule have kept us off

the volleyball court for a while, but we did get encouraged into a came a month or so ago when Paul Hoffman, a Whole Earth Preservationist and Volleyball Reservist, stopped by the office. We played a couple of rousing games and, if I recall correctly, Paul was even on the winning team. So, feel free to stop by if you're in the Northern California/Sausalito area.

And don't forget to let us know about any good books we should be reviewing. It's important to get suggestions and reviews from our readers, simply because you have knowledge about subjects we may be ignorant of.Whole Earth Review offers readers three-way communication: between us and you, you and us, and you and other readers. I think that's rare in a magazine.



Before he left, Oliver North held up and described to the committee slide from a pro-Contra briefing

Whole Earth Preservation Society
and Volleyball Reserves
The Point Foundation
27 Gate 5 Road
Sausalito, CA 94965

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